

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Status of the Application

Claim 1 and claims 3-7 and 11-21, previously withdrawn by restriction requirement, have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 22-27 have been added. They are supported in the specification at, for example, page 3, line 22-page 5, line 6 and original claim 1 (claim 22); page 5, line 24-page 6, line 5 and original claim 3 (claim 23); page 18, lines 9-10 (claim 24); page 22, lines 5-7 (claim 25); page 22, lines 2-3 (claim 26); and page 20, lines 10-18 (claim 27). Claims 2 and 8-10 are amended to depend from new independent claim 22. No new matter is added.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-2 and 8-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by JP 4-128728 (“JP ‘728”). Applicants have canceled independent claim 1, rendering the rejection thereof moot. Claims 2 and 8-10 have been amended to depend from new independent claim 22. Thus, the present rejection will be addressed with respect to new claim 22.

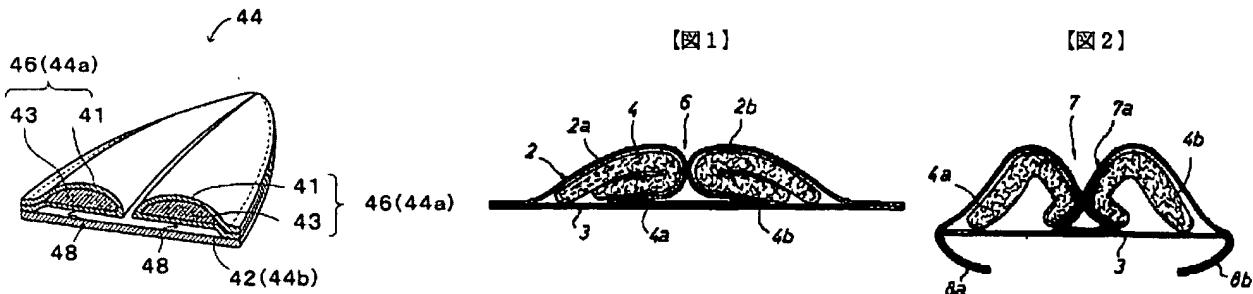
Claim 22 reads as follows:

Claim 22 (new): An interlabial pad for attaching to labia, comprising:
a pair of absorbers for absorbing a body fluid;
a pair of water permeable cover sheets covering the absorbers respectively, each water permeable cover sheet having a peripheral edge portion; and
a support sheet, having a peripheral edge that is bonded to the peripheral edge portion of each of the pair of water permeable cover sheets on a body face side of the support sheet,
wherein each of the pair of water permeable cover sheets is separated from the other water permeable cover sheet along a folding portion of the support sheet, so that when the support sheet is folded away from the pair of water permeable cover sheets, the interlabial pad thereby forms a void between a garment face side of the water permeable cover sheet and the body face side of the support sheet.

While claim 22 recites “a pair of water permeable cover sheets” 41 (see, e.g., Fig. 4 of present application below), JP ‘728 only discloses a sanitary napkin having a single absorbing sheet

2 (see Figs. 1 and 2 of JP '728 below). Single absorbing sheet 2 wraps around absorbing body 4a to backsheet 3, traverses backsheet 3 to absorbing body 4b, and wraps around absorbing body 4b.

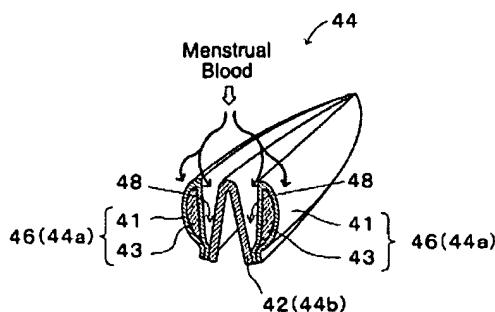
FIG. 4



Claim 22 further recites that “the pair of water permeable cover sheets are separated along a folding portion of the support sheet.” See, e.g., separation between water permeable cover sheets 41 in Fig. 4 above. In contrast, single absorbing sheet 2 of JP '728 is continuous (as described above) and joined to itself along a longitudinal centerline of the absorbent article (at 6 of Fig. 1 and 7 of Fig. 2 above).

Finally, claim 22 provides that “when the support sheet is folded away from the pair of water permeable cover sheets, the interlabial pad thereby forms a void between a garment face side of the water permeable cover sheet and the body face side of the support sheet.” See, e.g., voids 48 in Fig. 5 below when support sheet 42 is folded along the folding portion. On the other hand, Applicants submit that when the absorbent article of JP '728 is folded, for example along its longitudinal centerline, it will not form a void between cover sheet 2 and backsheet 3. Rather, the absorbent bodies 4a and 4b will compress and void space existing in the unfolded state will be reduced.

FIG. 5



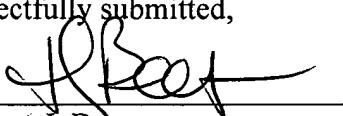
For at least these reasons, JP '728 does not anticipate claim 22. The remaining claims (2, 8-10, and 23-27) depend from claim 22, and are not anticipated for at least the same reasons. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn and the claims be passed to issue.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants believe the application is in condition for allowance. If there are any remaining issues which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number given below.

Dated: June 9, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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